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ABSTRACT

No other innovation in education in the United States has as much potential for improving education and reducing costs as the year-round operation of schools. Contrary to popular perception, the 9-month school calendar is not deeply imbedded in America's education system; throughout American history, the school calendar has responded to the evolving needs of the nation. The phenomenal changes in the past century in transportation, communication, and information technology have propelled this country beyond our public school system, which has remained in an "inertia of tradition" for the last 75 years. While there is ample reason to support a lengthened school year, it must be understood that our states generally are not funding education adequately for the days we presently have. But since single-track year-round education programs provide the typical 180-day instructional year with three or four shorter vacation periods instead of a 3-month summer vacation, operational casts should not significantly exceed those required for the traditional school year. Further, a multitrack continuous education calendar has the potential for a seating capacity increase of 25 to 50 percent; and in general, the greater the increase in capacity usage (beyond the maximum permitted by the traditional year calendar), the more potential there is for cost savings. (KM)

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YRE: A BREAK FROM TRADITION THAT MAKES EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC SENSE!

NORMAN R. BREKKE
Superintendent, Oxnard School District

November 1, 1990

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No other innovation in education in the United States has as much potential for improving education and reducing costs as the operation of schools year-round.

As we step into the 21st Century, we are finding a compelling need for reformed, restructured schools and the need for inspired, effective leadership to make them so. Lucy probably best set the needed educational transformation in motion when she asked" "On the cruise ship of life, Charlie Brown, which way is your deck chair facing?" Charlie quickly replied: "I don't know; I've never been able to get one unfolded."

There has never been a more urgent time in our nation's history for bold, decisive leadership. The Charlie Brown's of the world need to recognize that educational deck chairs can be opened and properly set in place.

An effective leader is one who is quick to recognize such a problem and has the tools and ability to address it with dispatch.

A TEACHER'S DIARY

I'd like to share with you an inspiring piece of American educational history which documents the creative ability of a teacher to produce order from chaos; he was one of our nation's great -- though unsung -- educators.

The archives of Somerset County, Pennsylvania include a diary written by an 18-year old gentleman who had been employed as a teacher in a rural, one-room school. Here is the entry from his diary for November 4, 1897 -- the first day of the new school year:

> **"I knew I had my hands full when I took this job. The school had history of problems. Eighteen teachers had quit. The last being struck in the head with a stove poker. I'm 18 years of age, some of the boys are bigger, and I'm sure, older than me. On my first morning, a disturbance happened in the back of the school. I stood on top of my desk and commanded three young men to sit. They cursed me and laughed. I pulled a revolver which was concealed under my coat, cocked the hammer, and stated with some authority, for them to sit down or we'll bury you in the school yard. They sat down! The school has settled down to business."**

For those of you familiar with the principles of Madeline Hunter's Clinical Instruction, this is what you'd call an **"anticipatory set."**

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THE SCHOOL CALENDAR: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

We need to be reminded that throughout American history, the school calendar has responded to the changing needs of the nation. The 9-month school calendar is not, as some believe, deeply embedded in the American educational system.

Prior to and through the 1800's, our urban centers, such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago and Cincinnati, maintained schools for 11 to 12 months a year in response to the needs of a burgeoning immigrant population.

During the same period, rural schools generally operated for only 5 to 6 months -- often from November through March -- when weather was inclement and agricultural labor requirements were minimal.

By 1915, largely to the onset of the Industrial Revolution, this disparity in urban and rural school calendars ended, and the 9-month calendar became the nation's standard.

The "Traditional School Year", as it is generally known today, has existed in virtually the same form for the last 75 years.

The powerful outside forces which have produced phenomenal movement/change this past century in transportation, communication and in information technology have in large measure by-passed our public schools.

I prefer to identify this lag as the **"inertia of tradition."**

A school today, it has been said, ought to be as different as the bank or insurance company today is different from those that existed in the time of Charles Dickens.

If Rip Van Winkle were to awaken today, our schools would be one thing he'd most easily recognize. Without question, they have been more successfully resistant to change than any other institution in our society.

Change in schools, it has been said, is like moving a cemetery: You move one body at a time!

And, contrary to what some folks would have you believe, there really wasn't an 11th Commandment which established the September through June school year.

No doubt about it, tradition has a powerful, well-entrenched constituency.

FINE-TUNING THE MODEL "A" FORD

Much of what has occurred in the name of educational reform during the decade of the '80s can be likened to an effort to improve upon the performance of the most magnificent invention of its time: The venerable Model "A" Ford.

We've been repairing it;
Tinkering with it;
Fine-tuning it;

We've added Michelin Radials,
Velour upholstery,
A new metallic paint,
And pumping it with super-octane fuel

-- and we're expecting its performance on the interstate to equal the sleek Porsche or the high-performance Mercedes.

The Model "A" was a wonder in its time; but all the repairs, tinkering and fine-tuning will not produce today's requirements for comfort and performance!

...and so it is with our nation's schools.

In our effort to squeeze that last 5-10% of horsepower/efficiency/productivity from an outdated, obsolete school system, we have tinkered, fine-tuned and repaired to the limit by:

- Requiring more students to pass more tests;
- Boosting graduation requirements;
- Holding administrators and teachers more accountable, and
- Following each legislative session we seem to inherit another volume of mandates and requirements to the Education Code.

And we've done all this with amazing results: We've created such teacher stress, frustration and "burnout" that we're forcing the best and brightest of our profession into more rewarding and profitable endeavors, and with little, if any, improvement in the academic achievement of students.

Our educational system is sadly and profoundly off track.

Hudson Institute Senior Fellow Denis P. Doyle, a knowledgeable and respected authority in this area has recently stated:

> **"American Education is failing for the simplest of reasons: It is fundamentally out of step with the larger social and economic realities of the global economy. Schools are slow to change, and with changes in economic and social life in America."**

Perhaps the title of a once-popular song says it best:

"The Old Mule Don't Plow Good Anymore!"

Oxnard has unhitched the good, but tired, old mule. We believe we've put a powerful engine in the educational buggy turning the driver loose and riding off swiftly toward meeting the goal of helping every student become everything he or she can and wants to be.

There are a host of indicators, that the nation is beginning to take seriously the challenge of bringing our schools into the 21st century -- restructured, state-of-the-art schools with the staff, programs and technology which can prepare students for satisfying lives and success in an increasingly sophisticated workplace.

The changes to come can no more be held back than could the crowd at the Brandenburg Gate. It's going to happen. The only questions are time, direction, and who will do it.

I believe that the time is now! The future is here. We are not going to touch tomorrow tomorrow; we are touching tomorrow today.

The educational landscape of our nation is changing -- rapidly, and Year-Round Education programs are very much a part of this transformation.

It is appropriate, therefore, to ask: What is YRE all about?

YRE: IT'S ABOUT MONEY

While our primary concern is educational quality, cost effective management of our instructional programs and facilities will continue into the 21st Century as a fundamental educational issue.

In my thirty-three years as an educator, it seems that I've spent more time trimming, snipping and cutting school budgets than in allocating needed new dollars for program enhancement.

We have always had, and will continue to have, a compelling need to squeeze 100 cents of value from the very limited dollars we spend for classroom instruction and school facilities.

Our motto, it seems has been **"Make do!"** And we should not be surprised when **"Make Do"** has come to influence the measure of student achievement in our schools!

Practically everybody agrees that America's schools need momentous improvements; unfortunately many of the laudable goals are cloaked in political rhetoric and are ridiculously mushy.

After studying our education problems at length, the governors and the President all agree that, among other things, by the year 2000 every school in the country should be free of drugs and violence and that U.S. students should be first in the world in math and science.

Great, only they didn't come up with a plan and the necessary funds to reach those goals!

In spite of our herculean efforts at economy, our nation's schools have fallen far short of the funding necessary to prepare our students adequately for good jobs and good lives in the next century. Certainly "throwing more money at schools", as the fashionable cliche has it, will not by itself improve basic education. No one argues seriously that it will. But in the absence of additional resources, carefully targeted to their best use, we will not have the quality schools that the 21st Century will demand.

Any analysis of the costs associated with year-round education must address:

- **Costs for an Extended School Year**
- **Operational Costs for Single and Multi-track YRE Calendars**
- **Potential for the Avoidance of Capital Costs in Multi-track YRE Calendars**

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR COSTS

While the 180-day school year is about the national average, in recent years there has been pressure to lengthen the school year to 185 days, as in France; 200 days, as in Scotland; 210 days, as in Germany; 215 days, as in Israel, 220 days, as in South Korea, and up to 243 days, as in Japan.

- Lee Iacocca has recommended a school year comparable to that maintained in Japan.
- Maryland's State Board of Education last September voted, subject to legislative approval, to add 20 days to their school year.
- and a 40 day increase is being proposed for the school calendar in the District of Columbia.

Similar recommendations are coming from:

- James W. Dyke, Jr., Virginia's Secretary of Education
- Bob Etheridge, North Carolina's State Superintendent
- Werner Rogers, Georgia's State Superintendent
- The Education Commission of the States
- The National Governors' Association

Using data published in October, 1989, by the American School Boards Journal, it would cost over $1 billion to add one day to the typical 180-day school year for the nation's 40,300,000 K-12 students.

THE UNITED STATES	
K-12 Student Enrollment	40,300,000
Per Pupil Expenditure	$4,509
Per Pupil Expenditure ($4,509÷180 days)	$25.05
Cost of Adding One Instructional Day (40,300,000 x $25.05)	$1,009,515,000

Using the same data source and computation, the incremental cost of adding one day to the school year would be:

California	$103,693,577
Texas	70,084,380
Florida	43,002,729
Oxnard School District	262,302

While there is ample reason to support a lengthened school year, it must be understood that our states generally are not funding education adequately for the days we presently have. Anything less than a proportionate, incremental funding for added instructional days would further exacerbate an existing funding deficit.

OPERATIONAL COSTS

The enormous range of variables which exists from one district to another has made calculations and comparisons of YRE operational costs a very complex process.

However, as more and more YRE districts have completed an analysis of their operational costs, this growing body of data has produced some generally consistent findings.

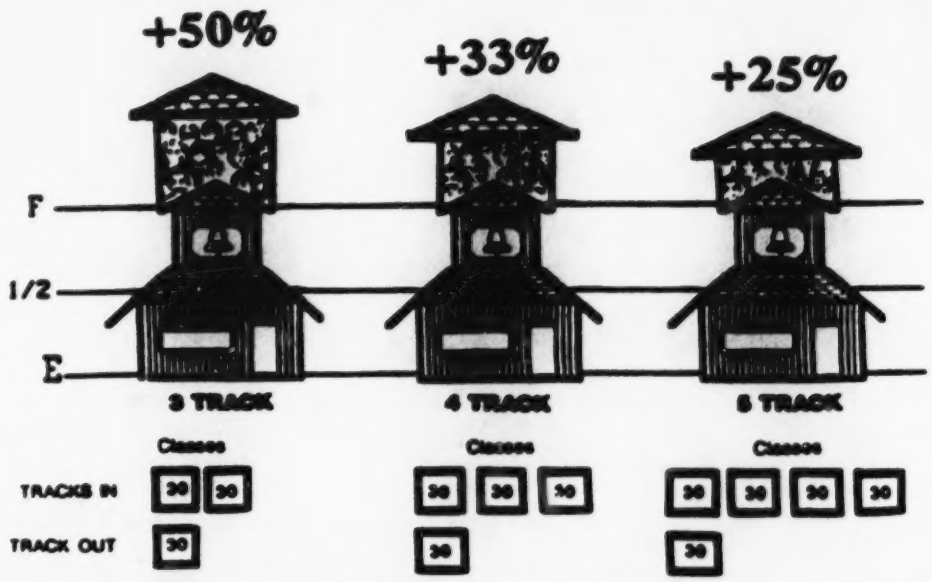
Single-track YRE Programs

Since single track YRE programs generally provide the typical 180-day instructional year with three or four shorter vacation periods instead of the three-month summer vacation break, operational costs should not significantly exceed those required for the traditional school year. Costs for staff, the operation of the school's physical plant, instructional materials and supplies, including any other expense for maintaining schools should be similar to those required for a traditional school year.

Multi-track YRE Programs

A multi-track YRE calendar has the potential for capacity building: a three-track calendar may increase a school's seating capacity by 50%; a four-track calendar may increase capacity by 33%, and a five-track calendar may increase a school's capacity up to 25%.

A MULTI-TRACK YRE CALENDAR HAS THE POTENTIAL FOR CAPACITY BUILDING



In general, the greater the increase in capacity usage -- beyond the maximum permitted by the traditional year calendar -- the more potential there is for cost savings.

Such has been the finding in Oxnard, San Diego, Visalia, Woodland and the Cajon Valley school districts in California. When a school reaches a YRE multi-track capacity ranging between 115% to 120% of its traditional year capacity, the operational costs per student reaches a "break-even" point with the costs per student in the same school operating at capacity on a traditional calendar. In large part, this reduction in per-pupil cost is a product of an economy of scale.

Obviously, operating a four-track YRE program which utilizes a school facility 242 days per year at 115% of capacity usage incurs a greater overall cost than maintaining the same school at capacity for 180 school days.

To avoid a comparison of apples and oranges, any analysis of YRE operational costs must be computed on a cost per pupil basis.

While all students in Oxnard are enrolled for a 180-day school year, the instructional program the full-range of pupil services must extend for the full 242 days when three of the four rotating tracks are in session.

Teachers are assigned to one of the four YRE tracks with a 183-day duty-year and share their students' vacation periods. Most other staff, however, are assigned to 12-month contracts, i.e. administrators, cooks, office staff, bus drivers, custodians and related support personnel.

Based upon a four-year study in Oxnard, the operational costs per pupil in a YRE school equalled those of a traditional school, when the YRE school's enrollment exceeded its traditional year capacity by 15%.

Since Oxnard's YRE schools, during this study, were loaded at 120% of their traditional year capacity, the per-pupil cost averaged 5.5% less than operating the same school at capacity on a traditional calendar. A YRE school, therefore, with its traditional year capacity increased from 800 to 920-students provided the identical educational program and services for $123 less than the per-pupil cost for 800 students in the traditional school. A cost savings of $123 per student multiplied for a 920-pupil YRE school generates a total **operational savings** of $113,000.

The Oxnard study also found that a YRE school loaded at only 110% of its traditional year capacity would incur an **operational cost increase** which is approximately 5.5% greater than the District's cost-per pupil on the traditional school calendar.

The Cajon Valley Union School District in a similar cost study found that a YRE program which accommodates a 25% enrollment increase--from 600 to 750 students--generates $99,982 of net revenue in excess of expenses.

The Cajon study calculated a "break-even" per pupil cost when a school's traditional year capacity is increased by 17% in a multi-track YRE program.

The Visalia Unified School District in its "Analysis of Traditional School Cost and Year-Round Cost" found that a 600-student traditional school which increases its enrollment in a YRE program by 15% to 690 students can reduce the operational cost per student by $9 per year. A 30% enrollment increase from 600 to 780 students generates a $51 reduction in operational costs per student -- a savings of about $40,000 annually.

Studies of traditional year and YRE operational costs generally confirm that there are **economies of scale** and that **the greater the increase in capacity usage, the more potential there is for cost savings.**

AVOIDANCE OF CAPITAL COSTS

As the 1990-91 school year began, the Oxnard School District had an enrollment of approximately 12,200 students-- 1,850 students beyond the district's maximum traditional year enrollment capacity of 10,350 students.

Since all students are assigned to the 60-20 multi-track YRE calendar, the District can accommodate this increased enrollment without an overloading of classes and schools-- and still maintain the same quality instructional programs and student services as provided in the traditional September through June school year.

Because of the additional seating capacity generated by the YRE program, the District has avoided the need and cost for two 925-student schools. Two new school facilities of this size, including land, would cost approximately $20 million.

With burgeoning school enrollments and an increasingly tight supply of operational and capital improvement funds, it is educationally and fiscally irresponsible, in my judgment, to leave our schools empty for 3 months of every year.

Beginning with the 1990-91 school year, California added 212,000 K-12 students to its public schools. Los Angeles alone added 15,000 new students to its unified school district. And, similar increases are projected to continue through this decade.

The California Department of Education projects 1,064,000 additional students or a 20% increase, during the next five years. Unless there is a major shift to YRE, more than 19 new classrooms (equal to a new elementary school) must be built in California each day, including weekends and holidays, for the next five years just to accommodate the increased enrollment. At the end of that time, classrooms would be just as crowded as they are now. California currently has the most crowded schools in the country. The total school facilities need over the next five years will exceed $14 billion or $2.8 billion per year. As of July 1990, 13 percent of California's public school students (kindergarten through grade 12) in 664 schools throughout the state attend school year-round.

It is fully expected that by the mid-point of this decade, at least half of the states 5 million K-12 students will be enrolled in multi-track YRE programs.

CALIFORNIA'S K-12 ENROLLMENT AND YRE PROGRAM EXPANSION

	1989-90	1990-91	Increase
California K-12 Student Enrollment	4,771,978	4,971,870 (+199,892)	4.18%
K-12 YRE Enrollment	447,887	546,917 (+99,030)	22.1%
YRE Districts	74	104 (+30)	40.5%
YRE Schools	478	664 (+186)	38.9%

This past September, in an effort to encourage YRE expansion California's legislature and Governor enacted a set of revised statutes which provide funds for YRE start-up costs, operational grants and air-conditioning for YRE schools.

The state has determined, based on a calculation totalling the average cost of construction, land costs, and the interest saved on state bonds, that a multi-track YRE program could avoid a facilities cost of $1,151 per pupil per year. The state shares in this cost savings by a sliding scale which gives higher percentages of the cost avoided to school districts based on the number of students in excess of capacity at that site. This calculation rewards districts that make the strongest commitment to multi-track YRE.

Based on the percentage of pupils claimed which are in excess of the site's capacity, the district would receive funding according to the following:

% of Pupils Housed in Excess of a School's Capacity Based Upon SAB Loading Standards	Funding Per Excess Students
0 - 5%	0
5% - 10%	575.50
10% - 15%	771.17
15% - 20%	863.25
20% - 25%	978.35
25% - +	$1,035.00

The new operational grant provides funding only for those pupils in excess of the capacity of the site; for example: if ABC Elementary School has a capacity of 600 pupils but by operating with a 20% enrollment increase on a multi-track calendar, and houses 720 pupils, the district would be entitled to $117,402 for that site. (120 pupils x $978.35).

If such a school maintains a four-track YRE program, no more than the school's traditional year enrollment of 600 students need to be on campus at anytime.

YRE MAY ALSO BE A MEANS TO ADDRESS ANOTHER NATIONAL CRISIS: STRUCTURALLY UNSOUND, OBSOLETE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

More than 22,000 school buildings in the nation are inadequate and 13 percent of those are structurally unsound.

A national study has found that one in four of the nation's 88,021 public school buildings need maintenance or major repairs; are overcrowded or obsolete, present environment hazards or have multiple problems.

One-fifth of the nation's schools were constructed more than 50 years ago, the study found. Nearly two-thirds were built in the 1950s and 1960s, "generally a time of rapid and cheap construction.... Many construction experts say the buildings were intended to last only about 30 years. If so, their time is up."

The replacement cost for these sub-standard school buildings has been estimated at $422 billion. In addition there is a need for $84 billion in new or retrofitting construction and $41 million in maintenance and building repairs.

While there is no question that the acute shortage of funds to build schools for our burgeoning student population is a national crisis of the first order; the fact that one-quarter of our nation's schools are in a **state of arrested decay** simply has to be a national crisis of the second order.

YRE: IT'S ABOUT LEARNING

Evidence is growing, slowly but surely, that year-round schools enhance academic achievement for all students, not just for low-income, limited-English-speaking and disadvantaged students.

In 1983, **Houston** tried a year-round program that resulted in such significant academic improvement.

A report by John Bishop from the **Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies**, titled Motivating Students to Study: Expectations, Rewards, Achievement, published in November, 1989, had this to say about year-round schools:

> **"Longitudinal studies of learning have found that the pace of learning slows considerably during the summer, and that disadvantaged students especially lose ground during the summer months."**
>
> **The report states that YRE programs which substitute several shorter vacation breaks for traditional 3-month summer vacation, enhance the momentum and continuity of instruction and produce high payoffs for educationally and economically disadvantaged students.**

I think most of us would agree that such an observation is intuitively obvious! Over the years numerous studies have focused on learning, retention and forgetting. Not surprisingly, research shows that students forget at different rates. Educationally and economically disadvantaged students not only acquire knowledge more slowly but tend to lose it more rapidly.

A **New York State Board of Regents** study in 1978 found that advantaged students learn an average of one year and three months' "worth of knowledge" during the school year, and an average of one additional months' growth in the summer, for a total of one year and four months' growth. A disadvantaged student learns an average of one year and one month's growth of knowledge during the school year, and then loses three to four months' worth during the summer -- for a net growth of seven to eight months. At the end of seven years, the advantaged child scores at the ninth-grade level, the disadvantaged child scores at the fourth- to fifth-grade level and becomes a potential dropout.

In Utah, **Brigham Young University** professor, Adrian Van Mondfrans, has recently completed a three-year longitudinal study showing greater gains on test scores for year-round students than for those on the traditional schedule.

A national coalition based at the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**, The Quality Education for Minorities Projects, recommended after a two-and-a-half-year research effort that minority students benefit significantly from year-round schooling.

During those years when the **Oxnard School District** maintained separate YRE and traditional schools, we found that the proficiency test scores and the California Assessment Program (CAP) scores were consistently and significantly higher at the YRE schools.

A seven-year comparison of Oxnard's average CAP scores and the state's average CAP scores, indicates that Oxnard's scores have doubled, tripled and, in some instances, more than quadrupled the state's increases.

CALIFORNIA ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

OXNARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

GRADE 3	Oxnard	California
Reading		
1982	220	258
1989	281 + 61	283 + 25
Mathematics		
1982	220	261
1989	264 + 44	280 + 19
Written Expression		
1982	224	260
1989	265 + 41	281 + 21

GRADE 6	Oxnard	California
Reading		
1982	200	254
1989	247 + 47	263 + 9
Mathematics		
1982	207	258
1989	254 + 47	263 + 5
Written Expression		
1982	217	257
1989	251 + 34	272 + 15

GRADE 8	Oxnard	California
Reading		
1984	217	250
1989	245 + 28	257 + 7
Mathematics		
1984	198	250
1989	246 + 48	271 + 21
Science		
1986	215	250
1989	251 + 36	269 + 19
History/Social Science		
1985	215	250
1989	239 + 24	263 + 13

There is simply no doubt, that YRE is providing an enormous, positive impact upon the academic achievement of our students.

In the traditional school calendar, our students were taking two steps forward from September to June, and one step back during the three-month summer vacation.

Our teachers observed even in the first year of our YRE program in 1976 that the 60-20 YRE calendar which shortens the vacation absences to approximately 20 school days, significantly reduced learning loss.

Learning is an incremental accumulation of knowledge and skills requiring constant, continuing reinforcement for full mastery.

Madeline Hunter, in **Retention Theory for Teachers**, states that the relation of practice to retention is more complex than doing something again and again and again. It requires that we distribute practice over a long period of time rather than massing our practice in a short period of time.

Dr. Hunter advises that mass practice is necessary at the beginning of a learning, then it is necessary to distribute practice. The **massing of practice** makes for fast learning; **distributed practice** makes that learning endure.

The so-called traditional/agricultural calendar wasn't structured for educational reasons, in fact the three-month break in instructional continuity violates the most basic principles of effective schools research and learning theory.

YRE: WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

It's a break from tradition that makes educational and economic sense!

New Mexico Governor Garry Carruthers, recently stated:

> **"The world has changed. Schooling has not." He calls for complete restructuring of our schools. Carruthers explains, "Most everyone agrees simply 'reform' is not enough."**

Thomas Shannon, Executive Director, The National School Boards Association, agrees:

> **"Any kind of social change", he says, "is going to bring about trauma. There's no question that YRE is the future. We have had a school year and school calendar that are wrapped around an agrarian/farm schedule. And it's defunct!"**

One point of national unanimity is the urgent need to find better ways to educate children, -- especially the increasing number who are at risk of failing -- and to find better ways of preparing future employees for productive work and citizenship.

The schools and curriculum that you and I experienced -- even if polished and fine-tuned-- are utterly inadequate for today's students.

Students of the 90's and the 21st Century are going to be different; their world is different; their work place will be different: the skills and knowledge required of an educated person are, and will continue to be, increasingly different. And to be responsive and effective, their schools must also be vastly different.

Reams of studies and reports have documented the compelling need to revitalize and restructure the educational system of our nation. In my opinion, no innovation in education has greater promise in addressing this need than YRE.

However, if you think for one moment that the implementation of YRE is going to be a breeze, think again.

Eric Severied offered some profound advice when he paraphrased a line by Rudyard Kipling:

> **"If you can keep your cool when all about you are losing theirs,**
> **it's likely you don't understand the problem."**

The problem is a need for restructured, revitalized schools enhanced by a calendar that makes educational and economic sense. The body at rest must be moved; the **inertia of tradition** must be broken!

If there's ever been a time in our nation's history when our schools have needed inspired leadership and pathfinders with vision, it is today.

Let us seize this opportunity for leadership and be counted among the pathfinders.

Let us not follow where the path may lead; but go instead where there is no path, and leave a trail!

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